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ABSTRACT

A survey was taken to find answers to questions being asked by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) about the teaching of ethics. A questionnaire was mailed to the 90 advertising programs listed in the 1983 edition of "Where Shall I Go to College to Study Advertising?" to determine where ethics was taught and whether the subject was covered specifically in a separate course or generally in several courses. Responses indicated that the accredited programs preferred teaching ethics in all courses, while departments of advertising tended toward offering a separate course. The consensus was that the "highly ethics related" areas in advertising courses centered around topics concerned with clients, effects on consumers (especially children), laws and regulations, and creative strategy, in terms of how benefits/claims were stated and products and services shown. The overall impression was that ethics was considered to be an important subject that was covered seriously by the majority of responding programs. How they covered ethics and how much time was devoted to the subject seemed to be where the differences occurred. Most respondents seemed to prefer to teach ethics as the subject became appropriate for the topic being discussed. Many respondents felt that ethics was a way of life that touched every part of advertising and that teaching it separately would make the course redundant. Others felt that control in teaching the subject was of primary importance and that teaching ethics should not be limited to the classroom. (HOD)

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THE TEACHING OF ETHICS IN ADVERTISING CURRICULA: AN ANALYSIS OF ACEJMC ACCREDITED AND NON-ACCREDITED PROGRAMS AND PROGRAMS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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THE TEACHING OF ETHICS IN ADVERTISING CURRICULA: AN ANALYSIS OF ACEJMC ACCREDITED AND NON-ACCREDITED PROGRAMS AND PROGRAMS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

A national survey has found that "Principles of Advertising" is the course most cited for teaching ethics by 44.3 percent of the responding advertising programs. Communication or Press Law and Ethics was second at 30 percent. Only four programs (5.7 percent), three of which are accredited majors offered by Departments of Advertising, isolate the subject in a separate, specialized course.

The study also showed that 28.6 percent of the programs taught ethics to some degree in all advertising courses.

The survey was taken to find answers to the questions being asked by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication about the teaching of ethics. All programs seeking initial or renewed accreditation must describe how, where, and by whom the subject is taught, and how quantity and quality of teaching it is evaluated. Therefore, questions in this study sought the answers to where ethics is taught, whether the subject is covered specifically in a separate course or generally in several courses. The question of who teaches ethics was posed and a description of the needed qualifications was requested. The author also attempted to find out if a consensus existed among the respondents about "highly ethics related" areas of advertising courses. The data

were analyzed to determine whether differences existed among ACEJMC accredited and non-accredited programs in Journalism/Communication/Advertising schools and departments, and programs in Marketing/Business Administration.

To conduct the survey, the author mailed a questionnaire to the 90 advertising programs listed in the 1983 edition of Where Shall I Go to College to Study Advertising?, edited by Billy I. Ross, Texas Tech University, and Donald G. Hileman, University of Tennessee. A total of 70 programs responded for a 77.8 percent return. Among them were 30 accredited and 28 non-accredited programs, and 12 business programs.

The study revealed that non-accredited programs rely more heavily on the Principles of Advertising (50%) and Law & Ethics (42.9%) courses to teach ethics than the accredited schools (33.3% and 23.3%, respectively) (see Table 1). Figures for the programs in the business schools showed an even higher reliance on the introductory course (58.3%). One program listed as a major in advertising offered only that one advertising course to its students.

Accredited programs appeared to have a preference for teaching ethics in all courses, and Departments of Advertising tended toward offering a separate course. Two schools recommended an ethics course in the Philosophy Department.

Accredited programs rely more heavily on their own advertising faculty to teach ethics (76.7%) (see Table 2). Because of the greater reliance on the Law and Ethics course taught by the Journalism faculty by non-accredited programs, their figures showed a higher percentage of journalism faculty involvement. In 14.3 percent of the programs, journalism faculty members were used exclusively.

Other than the principles and law courses, Advertising Campaigns and Copywriting were mentioned frequently enough to warrant comment. Figures for their use by all programs in Journalism/Communication/Advertising showed a difference among them of only one (1) percent for the campaign course and slightly higher at 4.3 percent for copywriting. The two most frequently named courses by the business schools other than Principles were Marketing Research and Advertising Management. Table 1 gives all the courses listed by the respondents and the percentage in which they were specifically mentioned. In instances where different titles were given for courses with similar content and objectives, the author listed them under one appropriate title.

Responses about qualifications needed for teaching ethics were few and were generally focused on having the Ph.D., scholarly credentials, professional and teaching experience in advertising, and mastery of the subject.

One respondent from a program that relies on the Journalism faculty to teach ethics pointed out that "we have a JD in Communication Law on the faculty." Another stated that "respected outside professionals teach these courses." The situation presented by one respondent is probably typical for some programs. He wrote "We have so few people in our program that they all must meet the broad, general qualifications for teaching advertising. Aside from that, we are qualified by devotion to ethics, which all of us have. (That's a subjective determination, of course, but it's the only determination we've got.)"

If a consensus on "highly ethics related" areas in advertising courses can be constructed from the comments of the respondents, it would center around topics concerned with clients; effects on consumers, especially children; laws and regulations; and creative strategy, in terms of how benefits/claims are stated and how products and services are shown. Two strong divergent views materialized in the responses to that question. One side professed that very few areas are highly ethics related. Typical comments were that "Ethics is a two- or three-day discussion near the end of each term." Another said, "Ethics is covered--though just in passing--in all our advertising courses." The opposing view stated that ethical areas could not be separated, that all areas of advertising are highly ethics related. A typical response was that "Ethics is part of

the business of advertising. I don't feel it can be easily separated." Another respondent wrote, "We equate ethical conduct with professional behavior that balances the consumer's right to know and be fully informed with the advertiser's need for efficient and effective means of communication with the consumer. As such, it is a stable and continuing issue in both our conceptual and performance courses."

An overall impression this study forms is that ethics is considered to be an important subject and is seriously covered by the majority of responding programs, whether or not they are accredited and whether they are from a communication or business unit. Each group has its minority who pays only lip service to the subject.

How they cover ethics and how much time is devoted to the subject seems to be where differences occur. Most respondents seemed to prefer to teach ethics as the subject becomes appropriate for the topic being discussed. Ethical conduct, they believe, is a way of life, and it touches every part of advertising. Therefore, teaching it separately makes the course redundant and not nearly as relevant for the students.

The major flaw to this argument voiced by some respondents is that the quantity and quality of the instruction cannot be monitored nor evaluated, especially when ethics

is primarily taught in non-advertising courses. They believe that control in teaching the subject is of primary importance, a highly ambitious goal considering its subjective nature and that teaching ethics is not limited to the classroom.

What has not been discussed or measured by this survey is the effectiveness of this instruction on the professional behavior of advertising graduates. Is there a positive correlation between teaching ethics and professional ethical conduct? Are certain methods of teaching more effective than others? Does it matter where ethics is taught or by whom? Does quantity of instruction have an effect? All these questions, and many more, provide fertile ground for further research and investigation.

TABLE 1

Percentage of Courses in Which Ethics is Taught
By ACEJMC Accredited and Non-Accredited
Advertising Programs and Advertising
Programs in Business Administration

Course Title	Accred.	Non-Accred.	Business
Separate Ethics Course	10.0	3.6	0
Ethics Taught in All Courses	36.7	21.4	25.0
Principles of Advertising	33.3	50.0	58.3
Law & Ethics	23.3	42.9	16.7*
Advertising Campaigns	13.3	14.3	8.3
Advertising Copywriting	10.0	14.3	8.3
Advertising Management	6.7	7.1	16.7
Research	3.3	0	16.7
Creative Strategy	6.7	0	16.7
Media Planning	6.7	0	8.3
Legal & Social Aspects	6.7	7.1	8.3
Press & Society	3.3	7.1	0
Sales	3.3	3.6	8.3
Contemporary Advertising	3.3	3.6	0
Theory of Advertising	0	3.6	0
Consumer Behavior	3.3	0	8.3
Cases & Problems	3.3	0	0
Persuasion	0	3.6	0
Principles of Marketing	0	0	8.3
Ethics Course in Philosophy Department	6.7	0	0

* Business Ethics

TABLE 2

Percentage of Ethics Instruction By Journalism and Advertising Faculty Members in ACEJMC Accredited and Non-Accredited Advertising Programs

Discipline	Accredited	Non-Accredited
Journalism Faculty	3.3	14.3
Advertising Faculty	76.7	57.1
Journalism & Advertising	20.0	28.6